

EXECUTIVE SESSION

PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE,  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

INTERVIEW OF: JOHN PODESTA

Monday, December 4, 2017

Washington, D.C.

The interview in the above matter was held in Room HVC-304, the Capitol,  
commencing at 3:08 p.m.

Present: Representatives Conaway, Rooney, Ros-Lehtinen, Wenstrup,

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Schiff, Himes, Swalwell, and Heck.

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Appearances:

For the PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE:

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

For JOHN PODESTA:

GLORIA B. SOLOMON, ESQ.

ROBERT P. TROUT, ESQ.

TROUT CACHERIS & JANIS

[REDACTED] Good afternoon, all. This is a transcribed interview of John Podesta.

Thank you for speaking to us and coming back to the committee, sir.

For the record, I am [REDACTED] a staff member of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence for the majority. Also present are numerous other members and staff, who will identify themselves as the proceedings get underway.

But before we begin, I just want to state a few things for the record.

The questioning will be conducted by members and staff that are present. During the course of this interview, members and staff may ask questions during their allotted time period. Some questions may seem basic, but that is because we need to clearly establish facts and understand the situation. Please do not assume we know any facts you have previously disclosed as part of any other investigation or review.

This interview will be conducted at the unclassified level.

We ask that you give complete and fulsome replies to questions based on your best recollection. If a question is unclear or you are uncertain in your response, please let us know. And if you do not know the answer to a question or cannot remember, simply say so.

You are entitled to have counsel present for you during this interview, and I see that you have brought such.

If at this time counsel could please state their names for the record.

MR. TROUT: Yes. Robert Trout from the firm of Trout Cacheris & Janis.

MS. SOLOMON: Gloria Solomon, also from Trout Cacheris & Janis.



[REDACTED] Thank you.

This interview will be transcribed. There is a reporter making a record of these proceedings so we can easily consult the written compilation of your answers at a later date.

Because the reporter cannot record gestures, we ask that you verbally answer all questions. If you forget to do this, you might be reminded to do so. You may also be asked to spell certain terms or unusual phrases.

Consistent with the committee's rules of procedure, you and your counsel, upon request, will have a reasonable opportunity to inspect the transcript of this interview in order to determine whether your answers were correctly transcribed. The transcript will remain in the committee's custody. And the committee also reserves the right to request your return for additional questions, should the need arise.

The process for the interview will be as follows. The majority will be given 45 minutes to ask questions, then the minority will be given 45 minutes to ask questions. Immediately thereafter, we'll take a 5-minute break should you desire, after which time the majority will be given 15 minutes to ask questions and the minority will be given 15 minutes to ask questions. These 15-minute rounds will continue until each side has finished their questioning.

Time will be kept by myself for each portion of the interview, and I will be giving warnings at the 5- and 1-minute mark, respectively.

To ensure confidentiality, we ask that you do not discuss the interview with anyone other than your attorney.

Finally, you are reminded that it is unlawful to deliberately provide false information to Members of Congress or staff. The record will reflect that you are

voluntarily participating in this interview, which will be under oath.

So at this time, Mr. Podesta, if you could raise your right hand to be sworn, sir.

Mr. Podesta, do you swear or affirm that the testimony you are about to give is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

MR. PODESTA: I do.

██████████ Thank you, sir.

Over to you, Mr. Chairman, for any opening remarks.

MR. CONAWAY: I have no opening remarks.

Eric.

MR. SWALWELL: Briefly. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Mr. Podesta, for being here today.

We just wanted to note, Mr. Chairman, for the record that this is the first witness in the matter who has been asked to return for a second interview. We're amenable to that and we understand that there's a new line of questioning that the majority wishes to explore, but we hope to have the same courtesy with some of the other witnesses who we would also like to invite back, in light of recent information we've learned.

We'd like to note that Mr. Podesta was quick and uncomplicated in his return visit, and we hope that is also a standard for others.

But we just wanted to note, in light of the plea deal with General Flynn on Friday, we believe there's additional reasons to have Jared Kushner come back and share with this committee some of the information around that plea deal.

And with that, I yield back.

MR. CONAWAY: Well, as you said, if new information becomes available

that warrants somebody coming back, we'll certainly do that. We have no way of compelling the quick return that Mr. Podesta showed the courtesy of doing, so I can't speak to that piece of it.

But, Mr. Podesta, any opening remarks you'd like to make?

MR. PODESTA: No.

MR. CONAWAY: All right. Thank you. We'll start then.

Mr. Rooney.

MR. ROONEY: Thank you, Mr. Podesta. And I agree with what Eric said. I appreciate your coming back. And, hopefully, this is a very brief interview, just based on things that have happened since our last interview.

But more broadly, can you tell the committee if you've had anybody approach you to provide any information with the ongoing investigation with regard to the 2016 election cycle, specifically Mr. Mueller, FBI, DOJ, since we spoke last?

MR. PODESTA: Since we spoke last, there's been a request for the emails that were in my Gmail account that may have been the subject of the attack on my email account. And we're in the -- I think those have already been provided to Mr. Mueller.

MR. ROONEY: Okay.

MR. PODESTA: But to be specific, there was a course of conduct in which they were trying to isolate the phishing attempt and asked for those, the emails that were relevant to that. And I think those have been provided now to Mr. Mueller.

MR. ROONEY: Okay. I'm going to ask a few questions about Fusion GPS, and then I'm going to turn it over to my colleague from Cincinnati. I say that with endearing -- all the love in the world.

Can you tell us how long you've known of Fusion GPS?

MR. PODESTA: Sometime after the election. I didn't know -- I didn't know about the company or their activities in advance of the election. So I think it came to public light and I first learned about it, read about it.

MR. ROONEY: How did you first meet them?

MR. PODESTA: How did I first meet them? The first time I met Mr. Simpson, who's a principal in Fusion, was in early February. I believe it was February 10th.

I believe I had had occasion, because I've had a long public career, to have met Mr. Simpson when he was a reporter for The Wall Street Journal. We were certainly not friends. I think it was only in the context of I had a long, you know, tenure on the Senate Judiciary Committee. He was an investigative -- I knew his by-line for sure, and I think I might have had occasion to talk to him. I certainly knew who he was, let's put it that way. I didn't have a real relationship with him.

MR. ROONEY: Right.

MR. PODESTA: But -- so the first time I really remember speaking to him -- and certainly about any of these matters -- was on February 10th.

MR. ROONEY: Can you tell us what the nature of that business was on the 10th?

MR. PODESTA: I was approached by a person who he had been in touch with about whether we would -- we could meet and kind of compare notes about what each respectively knew about what the Russian interventions in the campaign were. We set up that meeting. And the meeting was essentially about the state of play at that time, in February.

They were also interested in trying to raise money to continue their efforts

to investigate the, you know, the Russian interference in the campaign. And the -- so there was a context in which I think they were looking to me, if I was asked, to say that they were on the level and they were -- it was -- I say "they." Mr. Simpson, his partner, Mr. Fritsch, who was also I think managing editor at The Wall Street Journal or an editor at The Wall Street Journal.

They wanted to know that -- they wanted to continue that effort. And, as I said, they were trying to raise money for it and were hoping that I would, if someone asked me, would say that they were, you know, responsible journalists who had now gone into a different line of work, but that they were on the level.

MR. ROONEY: Is that the only time you met with him?

MR. PODESTA: I think it's the only time I met with him. I don't recall any other meetings with him.

MR. ROONEY: Was there ever any -- anybody ever reach out to you to ask you about that, whether or not they were legitimate or --

MR. PODESTA: Yeah. You know, again, they were actively trying to raise resources and funds for this. And people who I knew from kind of the donor world asked me, you know, what did I think, was this on the level, did they do good work?

MR. ROONEY: Did they ask you for money?

MR. PODESTA: No.

MR. ROONEY: I would ask you a couple questions about the meeting with Mr. Simpson, which was after the dossier was published, I believe. Is that correct?

MR. PODESTA: Correct.

MR. ROONEY: You testified previously that you did not know who paid

Mr. Simpson or Fusion GPS. Is that correct? And why the disparity?

MR. PODESTA: Well, I didn't hear a disparity.

MR. ROONEY: If you testified previously that you did not know who paid Fusion GPS, you met with Mr. Simpson after the dossier was published, did you not testify to us before something different?

MR. PODESTA: No.

MR. ROONEY: Okay.

MR. PODESTA: I think you're confusing an interview I did with the Senate Intelligence Committee with your interview.

MR. ROONEY: Okay. I'll check on that and make sure so I don't look as stupid as I feel.

MR. PODESTA: Maybe [REDACTED] would confirm that.

MR. ROONEY: Can you tell us what was discussed at that meeting?

MR. PODESTA: At the meeting on February 10th?

MR. ROONEY: Is it the same meeting?

MR. PODESTA: Yes.

MR. ROONEY: Okay. Did you meet with anybody else regarding the dossier and its contents?

MR. PODESTA: Well, I know that's a very broad question. I had that meeting, as I said, with Mr. Simpson, Mr. Fritsch. There was a person who they were in connection with, whose name I'm now trying to draw out. If you bear with me for a second, I'll remember it.

Can you help me with this? Dan?

MR. TROUT: Jones?

MR. PODESTA: Dan Jones.

Dan Jones, who was in the process of creating a nonprofit organization, as it were, to pursue the issues around Russian intervention in the U.S. election.

From time to time, I have obviously met with people to talk about the state of the, you know, what was -- what were the new developments, what was happening. Some of that -- you know, I've done press interviews. I've done interviews for documentaries. Some of that information involved information that was, I guess, contained in what I now know to be the dossier, but that is all subsequent to the publication in BuzzFeed.

MR. ROONEY: Okay. Did you ever hire or have Fusion GPS conduct services, directly or through a third party, on behalf of the Clinton campaign or the DNC?

MR. PODESTA: Well, there's a little bit -- what did I know? When did I know it? It has subsequently -- I've subsequently learned that the law firm which the campaign -- was both the general counsel of the campaign, Mr. Elias, Mark Elias, and Perkins Coie, the law firm had contracted with Fusion during the course of the campaign, but I didn't know that during the campaign.

That I believe --

MR. ROONEY: When did that happen?

MR. PODESTA: I believe that Mr. -- this is -- there's -- individuals on behalf of Perkins Coie have made public statements about this. So the details I know now I learned in late October of this year, of 2017.

The Fusion principals -- I assume that was Mr. Simpson and Mr. Fritsch, although I don't know that -- approached Mr. Elias in April, I believe, of 2016 and told him that they had been working for essentially a Republican entity during the course of the Republican primaries, developing information on Mr. Trump. And

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they were seeking to continue that work and were seeking a contract from Perkins Coie, which had the authority to contract with outside vendors to do research on behalf of the campaign. And that relationship was entered into, I believe, in April of 2016 and extended till October 31st of 2016.

MR. ROONEY: Did you, as chair of the campaign, retain Mr. Elias for any services during the 2016 election?

MR. PODESTA: Well, Mr. Elias -- we had an agreement with Mr. Elias, and he was our campaign counsel. So that was a decision that was made in -- you know, shortly after the campaign sort of got underway, I think. Maybe even before the campaign got underway, in the spring of 2015. We retained -- the campaign retained Mr. Elias to be the campaign counsel.

MR. ROONEY: Okay. I'm going to turn it over to Mr. Wenstrup, Dr. Wenstrup.

DR. WENSTRUP: Thanks for being here today.

MR. PODESTA: Sure.

DR. WENSTRUP: I appreciate it. Do you have representation with you today?

MR. PODESTA: I do.

DR. WENSTRUP: Could you state your name, sir.

MR. TROUT: Yes. It's Robert Trout of the law firm of Trout Cacheris & Janis. And my law partner here also is Gloria Solomon of the same firm.

DR. WENSTRUP: Okay. And you are not with Perkins Coie?

MR. TROUT: No.

DR. WENSTRUP: You previously had been represented by someone with Perkins Coie when you have been before us before.

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MR. PODESTA: Mr. Elias.

DR. WENSTRUP: Mr. Elias. Okay. So you know Mr. Elias and have known him for some time.

Let's go back to the Senate hearing, which I think was being referred to before. And that was September 18th, as I've been told. Is that correct? Does that ring a bell or sound close?

MR. PODESTA: Yes.

DR. WENSTRUP: And you testified then you did not know who paid Fusion GPS.

MR. PODESTA: I don't have a transcript in front of me. I don't know that that was the precise question. I think that I only learned subsequently that the payments were made through Perkins Coie, 50 percent from the campaign, 50 percent from the DNC. I didn't know that at the time I was before the Senate.

DR. WENSTRUP: So I can't imagine what it's like to try and manage a campaign of this size. And, obviously, you have a lot of lieutenants underneath you that take care of certain parts. But at the same time, so when the dossier came out, were you -- what was your reaction? Were you like, "Oh my gosh, where did this come from? What an interesting piece of work." I mean, what was going through your mind? Did it totally take you by surprise? Was it like --

MR. PODESTA: Some of the information in it was familiar, some was brand new.

DR. WENSTRUP: How was it familiar?

MR. PODESTA: You know, certain lines of inquiry that were there.

DR. WENSTRUP: Such as?

MR. PODESTA: I think Carter Page's interactions with the head of

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Rosneft, with -- whether -- he had denied meeting with high-level Russian officials. There was reporting going on suggesting that he had met with high-level Russian officials.

I don't know -- I don't place the time exactly, but I think it was in early July of 2016. It might have been in late June 2016. But he made a trip to Russia. He admitted as such to -- to the -- to the -- to the -- in public at that time. I know he's been before this committee as well. Sort of -- he --

DR. WENSTRUP: So what were your thoughts?

MR. PODESTA: So some of that --

DR. WENSTRUP: I mean, I'd be thinking, "Wow, who's this Christopher Steele?" Or maybe you knew him? Did you know him?

MR. PODESTA: I did not know Christopher Steele.

DR. WENSTRUP: So you were probably wondering, who's he, where did this come from. And, you know, as the campaign manager, you're going to take an interest in this. So did you see -- how did it come to your attention, the dossier?

MR. PODESTA: It was published in BuzzFeed. There had been some reporting about it I think in advance of that, going back to maybe just before the election.

DR. WENSTRUP: So from there, you see this. Did you sit with your staff and say, "Well, as a campaign, this is something we're going to want to talk about. What do we want to do with this?"

MR. PODESTA: The campaign was over.

DR. WENSTRUP: What kind of conversations did you have with your campaign team on that?

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MR. PODESTA: The campaign was over. I think it was -- I retained an interest in it for sure, what had occurred, what had happened, what the Russians had done, and maintain to this day an interest in it. But I didn't know Mr. Steele.

DR. WENSTRUP: What I meant from that was, albeit the campaign over, but, you know, discussing with your team, like, "Where did this come from? Was this part of our research? Did you" -- you know, anything like that?

MR. PODESTA: Not that I recall. But the team was scattered. We were -- the campaign was over.

DR. WENSTRUP: No one on the team? Did you ask Mrs. Clinton if she had any idea about this dossier?

MR. PODESTA: No.

DR. WENSTRUP: So one of the things you have oversight on, as the campaign chair, is where the finances are going, right?

MR. PODESTA: Well, I probably should explain the structure of the campaign. We had a campaign manager who budgeted the campaign, who reviewed the relationships and the contracts. I think you could think about this in a corporate sense as he was the CEO and I was the nonexecutive chairman. I was spending a lot of time on the road. I was raising money. I was interacting with senior-level political people.

I was not reviewing contracts. I didn't review vendors. I didn't review subcontractors. That wasn't my role in the campaign. I was a surrogate for the candidate. I was on -- as I said, I was on the road a lot. I was raising a lot of money.

DR. WENSTRUP: So then really at what point did you realize that this was coming from Fusion GPS?

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MR. PODESTA: I can't precisely -- I think I learned that from the public record, from reporting.

When that actually occurred I don't have fixed in my mind. It was sometime after -- I don't think I ever heard of Fusion GPS before the election, so it was sometime in the wake of the aftermath of the election.

But when Christopher Steele was identified, when precisely Fusion was identified as a company that was doing this, reporters were interested in this, they were reporting on it. I think, you know, it could have been late November, December, maybe even early January.

DR. WENSTRUP: So no knowledge of the arrangement to pay Fusion GPS for opposition research. Is that correct?

MR. PODESTA: Not during the campaign. I obviously have it now.

DR. WENSTRUP: Did you ever review expenses with the rest of the campaign in any way?

MR. PODESTA: I met weekly with the chief financial officer of the campaign, Gary Gensler, but that was at a -- that was at a very high level, to make sure we were on track, to ensure that our receipts and what we were raising was going to cover our expenses.

I was not -- I, you know, had a high-level knowledge of what our media spend was, what our social media spend was, what our head count was inside the campaign, but I was not reviewing line items in the campaign.

DR. WENSTRUP: But somebody was.

MR. PODESTA: The campaign manager.

DR. WENSTRUP: The campaign manager was. So the campaign manager would have been aware that Fusion GPS was being paid for opposition

research.

MR. PODESTA: That is -- Mr. Elias was aware that Fusion GPS was being paid for opposition research. But he had the authority to enter in -- I mean, it has become I think common that law firms are used, particularly in the context where you have a complicated financial record of your opponent, particularly one as opaque as Mr. Trump's, particularly in the context where the normal indices of transparency are not present -- refusal to release his tax returns, et cetera -- that law firms were -- are engaged to try to unpack bankruptcies, those kinds of things, gather legal documents.

And so Mr. Elias had the authority to do that. And I believe that in that context he had the authority to enter into a vendor contract with Fusion. But I didn't know that during the course of the campaign. I didn't know that he had done that.

DR. WENSTRUP: So Mr. Elias would be the only one associated with the campaign that knew that Fusion GPS was hired for opposition research? No one else in the campaign? Mrs. Clinton?

MR. PODESTA: I didn't say that.

DR. WENSTRUP: Well, that's really what I'm asking. What I'm trying to get at is who had oversight on that?

MR. PODESTA: I think that Mr. Mook certainly had the authority to give him the authority to hire vendors, but I don't -- you asked me whether Mr. Mook knew he had hired Fusion. I don't know that, and I'm not going to testify on behalf of Mr. Mook what he knew.

DR. WENSTRUP: No, I can understand that. If you don't know, that's fair enough.

But what I'm trying to say is, just if you can help me a little bit with this. I can't imagine that, you know, you're involved with a campaign where they send a bill for a million dollars and nobody on the campaign is questioning it or looking at the details of it or wanting to see --

MR. PODESTA: Well, you know more than I do, Congressman, because you know that they sent a bill for a million dollars. I don't know --

DR. WENSTRUP: No, that's a hypothetical. I'm saying someone sends a bill. Make it \$5 million. Make it \$50. What I'm saying is that no one on the campaign then -- was there somebody on the campaign that has oversight --

MR. PODESTA: Our financial --

DR. WENSTRUP: -- over how the law firm was spending money? Because personally, if I'm getting a bill from a law firm and paying any amount of money, they're showing me their hours. They're showing me everything that they're doing. You know that.

So my question is, I find it hard to believe --

MR. PODESTA: I think we had --

DR. WENSTRUP: -- that no one associated with the campaign would know that Perkins Coie had hired Fusion GPS.

MR. PODESTA: What I'm saying is that I can only testify on what I knew, which is that I didn't review those bills or the vendor contracts. That wasn't my role in the campaign.

DR. WENSTRUP: So fair enough. Do you know from your role in the campaign who would have been reviewing those contracts?

MR. PODESTA: I think the -- I think the general authority to hire that gave the authority to Mr. Elias to hire outside vendors would have come from Mr. Mook.

DR. WENSTRUP: Mr. Mook, okay. That kind of goes, because I just -- I just find it difficult to believe that no one at the Clinton campaign knew about the payments for the dossier in any way, shape, or form. And I'm not saying you do. I understand, you explained to me your role and that there are other people involved that had these other roles.

What I do appreciate is that you are referencing who we may need to talk to who might have knowledge that this is how the money was being spent. And I don't want to put words in your mouth, but I think what you're saying is you had overall knowledge of maybe where the budget was, but you weren't into the weeds. But somebody probably was, and that's what I'm trying to get to.

When did you first discuss the dossier with Mrs. Clinton, after the election sometime or at all?

MR. PODESTA: I don't know that I've ever discussed the dossier with Mrs. Clinton.

DR. WENSTRUP: Fair enough.

MR. PODESTA: I mean, you know, as I said, there were issues in the -- that were -- surfaced in the dossier that, of course, were of interest.

DR. WENSTRUP: Did Mrs. Clinton or anybody else with the campaign ever talk to you about opposition research and who you might hire?

MR. PODESTA: No. I think she was -- she knew that we had an -- we had an opposition research staff in-house. We -- the campaign directly purchased some opposition research.

And she knew I think in general terms that we were trying to figure out, which was not easy, what Mr. Trump's financial relationships were, what his relationships might be to Russia and other former Soviet Union actors that, you

know -- but I don't -- I don't think we -- I mean, she wasn't -- you know, if I wasn't, she certainly wasn't sort of saying, "Who are your vendors?"

DR. WENSTRUP: From the standpoint of Perkins Coie being hired by the campaign, were you aware of that --

MR. PODESTA: Yes.

DR. WENSTRUP: -- during the campaign? And did you know they were also representing the DNC?

MR. PODESTA: Yes.

DR. WENSTRUP: Okay. Are there any high-level decisions -- and, as you've stated, you were not involved with a lot of these types of decisions -- but were there any high-level decisions that you didn't have knowledge about while running the campaign that you later discovered that might have either been positive or negative? But high level I'm talking about. I'm not talking about, you know, a small detail. But anything at high level that was going on? Maybe besides this.

MR. PODESTA: Well, as I said, I think the day-to-day management of the campaign, the decision to expend funds, you know, where -- what our media spend was, I had a general knowledge of, but individual decisions about what States to spend money in, at what level, on what ads to buy were decisions that were made by the staff of the campaign, the team at the campaign.

DR. WENSTRUP: Were you aware during the campaign -- probably not, based on what you've been saying -- or after the campaign anyone with the Clinton campaign or the DNC having communications with Mr. Steele?

MR. PODESTA: Well, during the campaign, absolutely not. And I don't think -- I know of no one who has had a communication with Mr. Steele to date.



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But you'd have to ask, you know, Mr. Elias, Mr. Mook whether they've ever spoken to Mr. Steele. I certainly have not.

DR. WENSTRUP: Sure. And when did you first learn that Mr. Elias represented the Clinton campaign and the DNC? Did you know that throughout?

MR. PODESTA: I knew that throughout, yes. I mean, Mr. Elias is the top campaign finance lawyer on the Democratic side. His firm represented the Obama campaign in 2012. They represented the Obama campaign in 2008. He's a well-known campaign finance lawyer and well-known litigator who was successful in a number of Supreme Court cases and some cases involving voter suppression, redistricting, et cetera. He's, you know, the top guy in his field, I think.

DR. WENSTRUP: So when did you first learn that Mr. Elias had retained Fusion GPS?

MR. PODESTA: Well --

DR. WENSTRUP: To conduct opposition research, I should say, more specifically.

MR. PODESTA: Well, I think I first -- my first actual knowledge wasn't until October of this year. I mean, you know, the course of conduct, this question about who was Fusion, who paid Fusion, et cetera, started coming up this summer -- I, frankly, didn't pay much attention to it before that -- as a result of hearings on the Senate side.

And I think that, you know, whether there was some course of conduct in which information was coming to the Perkins firm through some course of conduct, I guess I had a hunch about that earlier, but I think I learned the details about it in October, as I said, in 2017.

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DR. WENSTRUP: So when he was here as your representative in June, you were not aware?

MR. PODESTA: I certainly learned much -- I learned that he had contracted with Fusion and that the bills were being split 50-50 in October of this year.

DR. WENSTRUP: But you didn't know in June, when he was here as your representative, there was no conversation, he never mentioned when working with you --

MR. PODESTA: Well --

DR. WENSTRUP: -- that he had hired Fusion GPS to do the opposition research?

MR. PODESTA: I mean, I think, again --

MR. TROUT: Excuse me. Congressman, I do want to avoid the witness getting into attorney-client privileged communications, because they're protected and you shouldn't be talking about privileged communications.

DR. WENSTRUP: Okay. Well, let's just scratch that and just answer the question, if you can.

Then did you know in June that he had hired Fusion GPS?

MR. PODESTA: No, not to the best of my knowledge.

DR. WENSTRUP: Okay. Is there anyone else associated with the campaign that Mr. Elias has represented personally?

MR. PODESTA: I don't know. I don't know.

DR. WENSTRUP: Okay. Mr. Conaway.

MR. CONAWAY: How much time have we got left?

██████████ Eighteen minutes.

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MR. CONAWAY: Again, thanks for coming quickly.

I'm a CPA by profession, and so I'm trying to kind of put my head around the internal controls, et cetera, at the campaign.

Did I hear you say to Mr. Rooney that the DNC and the Clinton campaign split Perkins Coie's fees 50-50? Did I hear you say that?

MR. PODESTA: No. I think Perkins Coie had an arrangement with the DNC and with the --

MR. CONAWAY: Separate?

MR. PODESTA: -- and a separate arrangement with the campaign.

But the payments to Fusion, as I understand from their statements at the end of October, were that those payments to their vendor were paid for 50 percent from the DNC and 50 percent from the campaign.

MR. CONAWAY: Okay. Fusion GPS was a 50-50 split?

MR. PODESTA: Yes.

MR. CONAWAY: Okay. So can you walk me through a bit of a chain of command at the campaign? Start, I guess, Mrs. Clinton at the top. So you're next?

MR. PODESTA: I'm the chair.

MR. CONAWAY: Chair. And then --

MR. PODESTA: Robby Mook was the campaign manager.

MR. CONAWAY: Who?

MR. PODESTA: Robby Mook.

MR. CONAWAY: How do you spell that?

MR. PODESTA: M-o-o-k.

MR. CONAWAY: All right. And then who did you say the CFO was?

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MR. PODESTA: Gary Gensler.

MR. CONAWAY: The Gary Gensler?

MR. PODESTA: The Gary Gensler.

MR. CONAWAY: Former CFTC guy?

MR. PODESTA: Yes.

MR. CONAWAY: All right. Then just on the accounting side, I don't need all the other stuff, anybody else in that chain of command that you remember under Gary that's day-to-day ops people?

MR. PODESTA: I'm just blanking on who his, you know, who his chief financial person was.

MR. CONAWAY: This would be somebody who was there every day?

MR. PODESTA: Beth Jones was the head of management.

MR. CONAWAY: Patrick Jones?

MR. PODESTA: Beth Jones.

MR. CONAWAY: Oh, Beth. I'm hard of hearing, I'm sorry. I really am. I'm sorry.

MR. PODESTA: And the finance team reported to Gary, but I mostly just dealt with Gary. So who his -- and that wasn't -- I wasn't really interacting with them all that much. You know, I don't -- I can't remember who his chief --

MR. CONAWAY: Was Gary day-to-day hands-on every day signing checks?

MR. PODESTA: Yes. I don't know if he signed the checks, but he was there every day.

MR. CONAWAY: Right. So he was a full-time employee for the campaign?

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MR. PODESTA: Yes. I think uncompensated, but he was full time at the campaign, like me.

MR. CONAWAY: Just kind of like what Dr. Wenstrup was talking about. If I sent you a check -- made up an invoice, Mike Conaway, CPA, services rendered, sent it to the campaign, you wouldn't just pay it, I wouldn't expect --

MR. PODESTA: Correct.

MR. CONAWAY: -- if I had done nothing. So somebody over at the shop, and that would have been -- you think Gensler would have been the guy that would know that?

MR. PODESTA: Gensler established the financial controls. Perkins had budgeted expenditures. They were billing against that. And those bills were paid.

MR. CONAWAY: And you would have expected the Perkins invoices to have been relatively detailed, in your experience?

MR. PODESTA: You're asking -- you're asking me a question I really don't have an answer to. I never saw --

MR. CONAWAY: But you're --

MR. PODESTA: No, I never saw Perkins' bill, as it were. That was being managed by the people who were operational inside the campaign.

MR. CONAWAY: I guess that's where we're trying to get to, to see who those guys were.

MR. PODESTA: Well, at the top was Gary.

MR. CONAWAY: Okay. All right. I appreciate that.

Given the long-running line of conversation among a lot of folks that the Russians were helping the Trump campaign or trying to hurt the Clinton campaign,

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that somehow they were, you know, at work with mischief during the campaign, what was your reaction?

You said -- I guess you said you found out in October. What was your reaction to the fact that the DNC and the Clinton campaign were paying Perkins Coie to pay Christopher Steele to pay Fusion GPS to work with the Russians to get the skinny on Trump?

MR. PODESTA: Well, I was with you up until work with the Russians.

MR. CONAWAY: All of Steele's conversations under the -- have you read the dossier?

MR. PODESTA: I have.

MR. CONAWAY: Okay. The reported Steele contacts with the Russians. Do you discount those altogether, that didn't happen?

MR. PODESTA: I didn't say that. I mean, I think there's a difference between an action directed by the Russian Government, approved by President Putin, executed by Russian intelligence, to interfere with a campaign and to interfere with the democratic process, to hack my personal email account, to hack the DNC, to hack State voter bases, all with the knowledge and approval, evidently, according to 17 intelligence agencies --

MR. CONAWAY: You know better than that. It's three.

MR. PODESTA: I think it was the unanimous view of the Intelligence Community.

MR. CONAWAY: No, no. The other 14 had nothing to do with that ICA. I mean, you can keep that up all you want to, but it's pretty clear that 17 is --

MR. PODESTA: I think there's a difference between that and someone who is trying to develop intelligence who is in the business of doing that. But you

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can draw your own judgments about that.

I found it, again, the idea that we were developing, trying to develop, trying to figure out complicated financial arrangements between Trump and entities like Bayrock and Felix Sater, Sergi Millian and his representation of Trump in the U.S., trying to find out what Carter Page was up to in Moscow, I think that was all perfectly appropriate.

MR. CONAWAY: Sure. So you are confident that none of the sources used by Mr. Steele were approved by Putin?

MR. PODESTA: I have no idea who -- I mean --

MR. CONAWAY: You're saying that -- you made a long-winded statement about --

MR. PODESTA: I know what I know that's been developed to date.

MR. CONAWAY: I'm just trying to establish whether or not you knew if any of the sources from Mr. Steele were related to the Russian Government.

MR. PODESTA: You'd have to ask Mr. Steele that.

MR. CONAWAY: I understand that. But I'm just -- you were very confident on the other side. I'm just trying --

MR. PODESTA: I'm confident because I trust the American Intelligence Community, which has established that, I think.

MR. CONAWAY: I'm sorry, which what?

MR. PODESTA: Which I believe has established that.

MR. CONAWAY: Okay. Again, I apologize. I'm hard of hearing.

MR. PODESTA: Okay, sorry.

MR. CONAWAY: I'm not trying to be a jerk about it. I just can't hear you. I have a hard time distinguishing consonants.

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MR. PODESTA: And I grew up in Chicago and I mumble, so I apologize.

MR. CONAWAY: Okay. All right.

MR. PODESTA: One of your former colleagues, Mr. Emanuel, used to have that problem too. Mumbling, that is.

MR. CONAWAY: I got you. I got you.

DR. WENSTRUP: I just have one more question, if I could. And I think I know the answer. But who at Perkins Coie would receive, oversee, and pay any bill from Fusion GPS?

MR. PODESTA: I assume Mr. Elias, but I don't know.

DR. WENSTRUP: That's my assumption too. We'll find out.

Thank you. I yield back.

MR. SWALWELL: Thank you again, Mr. Podesta.

I just want to be clear. Throughout the course of the campaign, did the Clinton campaign or, to your knowledge, the DNC use any of the more salacious material in the Steele dossier to advance the campaign, whether it was paid television or social media postings or surrogate commentary? Was that anything that you had seen used?

MR. PODESTA: Are you talking about the sex stuff in the -- what do you mean by salacious?

MR. SWALWELL: I mean, the Steele dossier was pretty -- there were some salacious charges in there. There were allegations about relationships that Donald Trump had, business dealings he was seeking to do in Russia. A lot of it that I had not seen used in the public sphere, but I just want to know, as the campaign chairperson --

MR. PODESTA: No.

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MR. SWALWELL: -- was any of that used?

MR. PODESTA: Not to my knowledge, and I don't think it was. I think -- like I said, I think we were -- even before there was evidence of the hacking, going back to probably late May, Secretary Clinton was making the argument that candidate Trump's views on Russia were out of sync with American policy. She gave a speech in San Diego, I think, in the last week of May.

And our tack was on what we thought was well out of the mainstream of bipartisan foreign policy, and I think at the time many Republican colleagues thought that as well, and was -- you know, but that had come up and Trump's embrace of Putin and Putinism had come up during the Republican primaries.

MR. SWALWELL: And that line of attack was informed by Mr. Trump's own words, not opposition research that Ms. Clinton had relied upon?

MR. PODESTA: It was informed by Trump's own words. And we thought that that was not in the interests of the United States to pursue a foreign policy that questioned the value of NATO, that suggested that the sanctions in Ukraine should be lifted, that ultimately -- this is prior to the time that the platform of the Republican Party was changed to be more Russian-friendly.

But, you know, so we were focused on the fact that he had odd views on Russia, let's put it that way, fairly early. And we were also trying, as I said, to understand what his financial relationships were to various parties.

You know, we were at some point -- I can't precisely place the timeline -- but, you know, we knew that Donald Trump Jr. had said Russian money was pouring into The Trump Organization. We knew about the relationship to Bayrock and their support for Trump SoHo.

There's another -- Tarek Afere (ph), I think, if my memory serves me -- who

was involved in the Trump SoHo operation.

Felix Sater had both connections to organized crime here in the U.S., and, you know, there was at least a suspicion that there was -- that he was involved with organized crime back in Russia.

So I think all of that was, I think, things we were trying to learn and explore. But, again, I think what people focused on, I think particularly when BuzzFeed published the dossier, when you say salacious, I'm thinking about the allegations. We never -- I don't think we ever raised that in the campaign. I don't think it was ever raised.

I mean, there was plenty of other stuff raised. I mean, if people were going to ignore "Access Hollywood," I don't think anybody would have really cared what he did in a hotel room in Moscow.

MR. SWALWELL: Just to, I guess, put to bed the relationship with Glenn Simpson, is it fair to characterize it as a person you knew of when you were working on the Senate Judiciary Committee but didn't interact with too often?

MR. PODESTA: And maybe when I was with -- maybe in -- you know, he was -- I knew him as an investigative reporter for The Wall Street Journal. So it might have been when -- during my time working for President Clinton. But I knew who he was, let's put it that way.

MR. SWALWELL: And during the campaign you did not meet or communicate with him?

MR. PODESTA: No.

MR. SWALWELL: And after the campaign, your recollection is that early February is the only time you did meet and communicate with him?

MR. PODESTA: I think that's the only time I met with him.

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MR. SWALWELL: 2017.

MR. PODESTA: And I think it's the only time I communicated with him.

MR. SWALWELL: And Fusion GPS, prior to the Clinton campaign in 2016, had you ever, for any other clients, ever used Fusion GPS, or any other campaigns you were affiliated with?

MR. PODESTA: No, not to the best of my recollection.

MR. SWALWELL: And how about Christopher Steele? I just want to be clear. Your testimony is you've never met him?

MR. PODESTA: Never met him, didn't know who he was. First learned about him, you know, after the election. There was a mention of him -- which I had forgotten was actually before the election until fairly recently -- in a Mother Jones article, but that did not identify him by name and didn't identify Fusion by name. That, I think, was published on October 31st.

But we were dealing with other things on October 31st. We weren't really focused on Mother Jones and it didn't get any real pick-up. But after the election, this story line began to develop, I think.

MR. SWALWELL: Can you tell us briefly about your experience just working on campaigns and how opposition research works?

MR. PODESTA: Sure. You try to find out as much about your opponent as possible. In a legitimate campaign, you, you know, you only allege things that you think are true and fair and go to the quality of the candidate.

And, you know, again, as I noted, I think Mr. Trump -- you know, we did research on some of the other Republican candidates during the course of the primaries as well -- but Mr. Trump was particularly challenging because he -- because of the lack of transparency.

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Just last week, a Federal District Court judge finally opened up a settlement that he made with the Polish workers who were undocumented who built Trump Tower. At least they tore down the building that was on the site of where Trump Tower is built.

Reporters were trying to get that. We were trying to get that -- I say that -- reporters were trying to get that during the course of 2016. It took more than a year for that \$1.35 million settlement to be released to the public and took an order of a Federal judge.

MR. SWALWELL: And it's your testimony that for the Clinton campaign 2016 opposition research was contracted out?

MR. PODESTA: No. We had a team of opposition researchers inside the campaign looking at, you know, the -- I mean, if one of the other people had been selected to run, you'd have been more -- the normal things that you always do in-house are look at their voting record, look at their public statements, look at their, you know, their public record as a publicly elected official.

Mr. Trump had never been an elected official. He was running as a business guy. So the heart of what was, you know, indicated, you know, his success, his failure, the bankruptcies, et cetera, were really in that realm of business. And that's, I think, in particular where legal expertise was helpful to try to unpack these very complicated structures.

I think people still don't know what his financial realm looks like. He hasn't been particularly helpful in trying to do that. We didn't have access to his tax returns. You know, he said he would release them after the election. He didn't. Or maybe he said he'd release them after he was done with his audit. Maybe the audit is still going on, I don't know.

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And so we were, you know, actively engaged in trying to understand how he conducted his business affairs, what kind of arrangements he had made. He had the string of failures in Atlantic City. He stiffed contractors. We were trying to discover that, because we think it went to his character, went to his veracity, went to his transparency.

And that was being done, as I said, by in-house researchers at the campaign, in-house researchers at the DNC, some purchased outside research. I think that may have involved more the other candidates, but we had -- we at least contracted to some extent with some outside researchers. And then we -- and Perkins Coie was collecting information.

[4:00 p.m.]

MR. SWALWELL: So it sounds like for more technical complex financial transactions or legal filings you'd have to go through, that's where contract work would be used?

MR. PODESTA: I think that was true in our case and I think that that was the experience. I don't know. Obviously, I don't have the depth of knowledge on the Republican side, but I think on -- but, again, I think even in 2012 election -- at least my understanding, I don't have firsthand knowledge of this -- that President Obama used Perkins to understand particularly Governor Romney's business background.

MR. SWALWELL: Are there specific types of people in terms of skill sets who are drawn to the type of work of opposition research, just in your experience?

MR. PODESTA: You know, I think that you have to be someone who's dogged and pays attention to detail.

MR. SWALWELL: What about professional backgrounds that you found?

MR. PODESTA: I think that you find people who are, you know, particularly people with a legal background on some of these kind of questions, policy researchers on things like, you know, if you're really trying to understand and make an issue of the person's voting record, and if they are currently -- someone who is currently in public office.

MR. SWALWELL: How about journalism?

MR. PODESTA: Definitely. I think people who -- particularly journalism, more narrowly investigative journalists who kind of do the same thing really, corporate researchers, people who get paid, you know.

MR. SWALWELL: How about law enforcement professionals, former law

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enforcement professionals?

MR. PODESTA: Yeah, I think sometimes private detectives do this sort of business, people who have that kind of background.

But for the most part I think in campaigns that I've been involved with there are people who, as I said, are lawyers, former journalists, people who have expertise in policy, people who have expertise in being able to run down and decipher, you know, financial transactions.

MR. SWALWELL: How common is it in your experience what happened with what you now know Fusion GPS working at first for a Republican entity and then coming over to --

MR. PODESTA: I think that's unusual. I think mostly it doesn't tend to be a bipartisan field of endeavor, you know. To some extent you work one side of the street or the other, either you're working in Democratic politics or Republican politics. I think it's unusual to cross over.

I think that in this case, as I now understand it, the Fusion team felt like they had developed a significant number of leads that they came to Mr. Elias, not vice versa, and said we would like to continue to work on this project.

MR. SWALWELL: And to your knowledge, could it also have been anything about just duty to country because of what they had learned or concerns that they had had?

MR. PODESTA: I don't want to put motive into their minds.

MR. SWALWELL: If you know.

MR. PODESTA: I think that the -- there's -- you know, I think that they were alarmed at some of the, you know, business dealings that Mr. Trump had had.

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I don't know whether when that happened, I don't believe they had retained Mr. Steele, so I think this was largely business forensics at that point. I could be wrong about that, but I believe they retained Mr. Steele at a subsequent -- I've read that. I don't know that to be true.

MR. SWALWELL: Now, how about the Trump campaign? To your knowledge, were they conducting opposition research on Secretary Clinton?

MR. PODESTA: They were -- they were certainly --- they were certainly leveling lots of charges against us, and, yes, they were conducting opposition research on us. I think they were also relying on outside sources.

MR. SWALWELL: Like the Russians?

MR. PODESTA: Well, ultimately the Russians. I think that they were -- the initial round of attacks came from a -- I think I have this right -- at least a -- came from a book that was done in advance of the campaign called "Clinton Cash" that was funded by sources closest to Steve Bannon. Maybe by Breitbart, but I think it was Steve Bannon.

So, yeah, there was outside research going on. They were certainly peddling a lot of it. And then of course they were leveling charges, some of which were completely factually inaccurate.

MR. SWALWELL: And when I reference the Russians, I mean would it be accurate to say that in your experience with opposition research that the hacking of your emails and hacking of Democratic emails and then putting those in the public sphere, that is a form of opposition research, albeit ill-gotten, but that's research on your opponent.

MR. PODESTA: Obviously I think what was so shocking about what happened in 2016 -- and I think I discussed this when I was here the last



time -- there have been incidents of foreign intelligence gathering inside of campaigns before, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Those were done for intelligence purposes really, to kind of -- I think -- to try to understand where they were going should they be elected. And there's, you know, there are a lot of countries who are active in gathering intelligence in a variety of ways, including through cyber technique.

What was different about this was the weaponization of the fruits of that and the direct use in the campaign to influence the campaign. That had occurred previously in Russia's backyard in Georgia, in the Baltics, et cetera. We've now seen it subsequently occur in France, in Spain, at least now Theresa May is saying in the run-up to Brexit in the U.K., in Germany.

And so that's a much more -- that is not in my -- there's a line that was crossed from intelligence to active measures interference with the democratic process. And that was new, at least new to my experience.

MR. SWALWELL: I take it that you remember former Director Comey's decision to reopen the investigation into Secretary Clinton's emails last October?

MR. PODESTA: I certainly do.

MR. SWALWELL: At that time were you concerned about political considerations that may have been a part of the Director's decision? And if so, what were your concerns?

MR. PODESTA: Well, it seemed inexplicable that he would do that in a public way so close to the election. I think he was criticized on a bipartisan basis from former prosecutors and members of -- former senior leadership of the Justice Department, both Republicans and Democrats, including President Bush's former

Deputy Attorney General, for example.

To do that so close to the election, in such a public and explosive way, particularly when he had the opportunity, as he ended up doing, which is to look at the contents and then say never mind 10 days later, I think it damaged our campaign. And we were -- we understood that perhaps he was under pressure to do IT, but we didn't understand why he succumbed to the pressure.

MR. SWALWELL: I yield to Mr. Heck.

MR. HECK: I do. How much time, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] You've got about 22.

MR. HECK: Mr. Podesta, thanks for being here. I was unable to be here during your last appearance and so I apologize if I ask any questions which are redundant. I'm seeking to place this in context.

MR. PODESTA: Sure.

MR. HECK: And wanting to kind of dig a little bit deeper into your role.

Do I understand correctly you were the only chair --

MR. PODESTA: Yes.

MR. HECK: -- of the campaign and that you functioned, as indicated earlier, like a nonexecutive chairman of the board?

MR. PODESTA: Uh-huh. I think that's a fair description.

MR. HECK: To the best of your recollection, since you were involved not in the approving of contracts or the approving of particular invoices, but kind of the big picture expenditures, can you give us an idea about the total amount of money that was spent by the Clinton campaign through the Clinton campaign as opposed to external entities? I'll take an estimate.

MR. PODESTA: Probably \$800 million dollars.

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MR. HECK: And do I assume correctly that there were, however, other and external entities that were raising money?

MR. PODESTA: We had a joint fundraising agreement with the DNC. The DNC was raising funds. And we were raising money into that -- we were raising money into -- through that joint fundraising committee for the DNC. There were independent expenditures that were being made in essence on behalf of the campaign, the largest of which was Priorities USA, which was 527?

MR. HECK: The joint fundraising with the DNC, do you have any ballpark estimate on what that amount of money would approximate?

MR. PODESTA: I probably knew this at one time. I would think another \$300 million or \$400 million?

MR. HECK: So between her direct election committee and the joint efforts, you're easily north of a billion dollars on expenditures?

MR. PODESTA: I think it's -- yeah, it's right around there.

MR. HECK: The campaign then itself at its peak, can you give me an estimate as to the approximate number of paid staff?

MR. PODESTA: Again, we had some joint staff, but I think it was around 600.

MR. HECK: You mentioned earlier that you had regular meetings with Mr. Gensler, the CFO?

MR. PODESTA: Yeah.

MR. HECK: Did you have any other regular meetings that were a natural result of your oversight chairmanship responsibilities with any other individuals or committee on a regular basis?

MR. PODESTA: Sure. As I noted, I traveled a lot as a surrogate for the

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campaign.

MR. HECK: I'm going to ask about that in a minute.

MR. PODESTA: But I think when I was in the Brooklyn headquarters, because of my background and my long experience as a policy person, I routinely and regularly met with the policy team. I had regular interaction with the communications, our senior vice president for communication Jennifer Palmieri and her senior people. I was a principal point of contact with some of the -- and spent time coming and meeting with Members of Congress, with Democratic governors, and others.

But in terms of regular meetings, probably the place I spent most of my time was in policy and communications. Most of the field structure of the campaign reported directly to Mr. Mook and not to me. I mean, I would be out on the road, so I would encounter them, but that wasn't -- none of those people were my direct reports.

MR. HECK: Were policy and communications direct reports?

MR. PODESTA: Not -- no. Really the structure of the campaign was that the campaign manager had the direct reports, but I was, because of my background, I was more engaged with them, I would say.

MR. HECK: You mentioned travel. If you had to estimate, the number of days per week you traveled.

MR. PODESTA: I was probably on the road half the time.

MR. HECK: So we've talked about some of the functional areas. I'm going to ask you if you spent time on each of these. You've already indicated you spent regular time on policy and on communication and on liaison with other elected officials.

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Fundraising and/or donor maintenance.

MR. PODESTA: I spent a lot of time on that.

MR. HECK: Organization oversight issues, such as personnel selection.

MR. PODESTA: That would really only -- I would only really get involved with that if there was, like, an issue that was kind of a problem had surfaced. You know, if we needed to try to move a senior person out because they weren't working out or something like that.

But I wasn't -- but I wasn't -- most of the senior managers in the campaign had personnel authority throughout over their own teams.

MR. HECK: Vendor selection and or relationship maintenance.

MR. PODESTA: No, other than in the initial set-up of the campaign, the selection of Grier Margolis (ph) as our principal ad maker, if you will, and the selection of Joel Benison (ph) and his firm as our principal survey research firm.

MR. HECK: So you did media, you were involved in a material way in the initial selection of the media consultants and the public opinion polling --

MR. PODESTA: Correct.

MR. HECK: -- consultants.

I'm going to use a term of art from our business which you will recognize.

MR. PODESTA: Okay.

MR. HECK: Care and feeding of the candidate.

MR. PODESTA: You know, I dealt with her constantly throughout the campaign.

MR. HECK: On a daily basis, on average?

MR. PODESTA: On -- I'm sure I interacted with her 5 days a week.

MR. HECK: So --

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MR. PODESTA: I didn't -- I traveled with her, but I wasn't -- but I was really keeping my own schedule of travel.

So during, you know, some parts of the primary schedule, and then towards the end and in the general election schedule, I would be on the plane with her, but that was irregular, I would say, because I was doing -- I was, you know, out doing my own series of fundraising events, et cetera, doing my own media appearances.

MR. HECK: Did you have personal staff that supported you?

MR. PODESTA: Yes.

MR. HECK: How many?

MR. PODESTA: Two.

MR. HECK: So of all of these --

MR. PODESTA: Or I should say 1-1/2. I had an assistant and I had another person who was -- I think inside the campaign was viewed as my person but who had -- also had considerable independent responsibility inside the campaign that wasn't related to what I was doing.

MR. HECK: So of all these functional areas that we've indicated, which, if you had to rank order them, would be the highest consumers of your time? Finishing this sentence, "I spent more time doing X than anything else," solve for X.

MR. PODESTA: You know, I think I spent, as I said, I think I spent more time than doing anything else on -- particularly after the campaign got up and rolling -- on raising money and doing -- and being essentially a high touch person on the political relationships and organizational relationships.

MR. HECK: I want to go back to the question of the relationship with Perkins Coie. Just to be clear, you were aware that the campaign had a

contractual relationship with Perkins Coie.

MR. PODESTA: Yeah, absolutely.

MR. HECK: Was that, in fact, a contract?

MR. PODESTA: Yes.

MR. HECK: To your knowledge, did it stipulate an expectation of opposition research?

MR. PODESTA: I think from the -- one of reasons we selected Perkins Coie was because they had the broad bandwidth to do things like be able to be useful in the context of opposition research, including -- and particularly in those kind of financial realm.

MR. HECK: So --

MR. PODESTA: Senator Clinton in 2008 used a different firm as her principal campaign finance firm, but it was a much smaller firm and didn't have those capacities. Perkins Coie is a large, you know, national firm. I think one of the reasons that we went with Perkins Coie was because they could do that.

MR. HECK: So it was your expectation that they could conduct that. But do you recall whether that was specifically called out in the contract?

MR. PODESTA: I didn't review the contract per se, so I don't know, but I think there was an expectation that they would be able to provide those kind of services.

MR. HECK: You mentioned that there was other additional opposition research being conducted that you were aware of, that there was in-house capacity, correct?

MR. PODESTA: Uh-huh.

MR. HECK: Do you have any idea of the approximate number of people



engaged in it at that level?

MR. PODESTA: I would guess about 10.

MR. HECK: And you indicated that the DNC also had people tasked full-time to this as well?

MR. PODESTA: Yes.

MR. HECK: Were there other vendors hired by the campaign or the DNC to engage in opposition research?

MR. PODESTA: I am uncertain about whether we used other vendors. I know we purchased some other opposition research from firms. So to the extent that's a vendor --

MR. HECK: It is.

MR. PODESTA: -- yes. So the answer to that is yes.

MR. HECK: I want to ask you a question finally about vendors in general. I understood that you only had responsibility for input on the media and the public opinion survey.

But, Mr. Podesta, when you stop and think about all the kinds of vendors that a 1-plus-billion-dollar campaign undertaking would countenance, what would be, through all lines of work, virtually all of which you had nothing do with, let alone review their contracts, would you guess that there were more than 12, more than two dozen, more than three dozen?

MR. PODESTA: Oh, I'm sure there were hundreds.

MR. HECK: Hundreds of vendors?

MR. PODESTA: Of vendors, sure. I mean, when you think of mail, printing, you know, staging, sound, you know, there were hundreds of vendors on the campaign.



MR. SWALWELL: We yield back.

MR. HECK: Thank you, sir.

MR. CONAWAY: Just a couple of followup things.

Opposition research team in-house, would they have had -- the 10 people you mentioned -- would they have had the interaction with Perkins Coie as to coordinating what Perkins Coie was trying to get done or where they were going at?

MR. PODESTA: I don't think so.

MR. CONAWAY: And who did they report to in that chain of command we talked about earlier?

MR. PODESTA: They were housed in the communications department.

MR. CONAWAY: And who did they -- who ran --

MR. PODESTA: Jennifer Palmieri.

MR. CONAWAY: Say again?

MR. PODESTA: Jennifer Palmieri.

MR. CONAWAY: Okay. And then she directly -- she reported to Mook?

MR. PODESTA: Yeah.

MR. CONAWAY: Okay. And then just to clear up, my good friend Eric was asking about Russian influences, and I think you said, yes, they did. I want to make sure that we don't confuse. Do you believe that the Russians were colluding with the Trump campaign, the Trump folks, conspiring with them or coordinating with them? I don't want to --

MR. PODESTA: Mr. Conaway, that's your job to figure out, not mine.

MR. CONAWAY: All right. Well, I just want to make sure that your answer to Eric's comment about the Russians interfering, that you don't have

any --

MR. PODESTA: I know General Flynn just pled guilty. I know that Mr. Page appeared before you in a sort of incoherent manner. But I don't -- you know, I think that that's for you guys to figure out and Mr. Mueller to figure out.

MR. CONAWAY: So if this -- if your testimony today were referred to in a report, it would be okay for us to say that you did not have any personal knowledge that the Russians were in works -- worked with the Trump campaign, colluding and conspiring?

MR. PODESTA: I had personal knowledge that the Russians were interfering in the campaign.

MR. CONAWAY: I understand that.

MR. PODESTA: On behalf of Mr. Trump. But that's the extent --

MR. CONAWAY: Then how is that -- one at a time. And that's my fault, I'm talking over you.

So you have knowledge that the Trump campaign was working -- I mean, excuse me, that the Russians -- state it again.

MR. PODESTA: I have personal knowledge that the Trump -- that the Russians were interfering in the campaign on behalf of Mr. Trump and against Secretary Clinton.

MR. CONAWAY: And what is that knowledge?

MR. PODESTA: Well, they stole 55,000 of my emails and published those. That was a crime. That was done, by everyone's estimation, by a unit or people working in collusion with the Russian GRU.

They -- I have read that -- so that's my firsthand knowledge. I have read that they also --

MR. CONAWAY: Okay. With respect to the firsthand knowledge, how do you know that that was done on behalf of the Trump campaign?

MR. PODESTA: Well, that I only know from reading the -- what you think is 3 and I think is 17 intelligence --

MR. CONAWAY: So all right, let's explore that 17. The National Geospatial Agency, you think they had a lot to do with the ICA?

MR. PODESTA: I think it was a -- it was -- I don't know. I've worked in the government, as you know, and I've worked in intelligence, and I think it was a unanimous view of the U.S. Intelligence Community.

MR. CONAWAY: Well, I think the report speaks for itself that it was 3 and that the 17 is a talking point that you and your colleagues have pushed forward. But it is irrelevant to what we're doing right now.

So back to your firsthand knowledge that the Russians and the Trumps colluded --

MR. PODESTA: I didn't say that.

MR. CONAWAY: -- conspired, coordinated.

MR. PODESTA: I didn't say that. I said that --

MR. CONAWAY: So no answer to a question to anything Mr. Swalwell asked would speak to that.

MR. PODESTA: I said the Russians actively interfered in the election.

MR. CONAWAY: Okay.

MR. PODESTA: And they did it on behalf of Mr. Trump.

MR. PODESTA: How do you know they did it on behalf of Trump campaign?

MR. PODESTA: I said on behalf of Mr. Trump.

MR. CONAWAY: Well, how did --

MR. PODESTA: Because it was one-sided, it was purposeful, it was constant. And I think -- my law professor always told me never to say "res ip so loqueter" (ph) -- but I think the evidence for itself that they were interfering in the election and they doing it on a one-sided basis to hurt Secretary Clinton and, at least by implication, to help Mr. Trump.

MR. CONAWAY: So implication about help the Trumps. I mean, no -- this is your inferences, based on what they did, how they did it, and when they did it, that it was targeted to help the Trumps, but not anything with respect to whether the Trumps might have been --

MR. PODESTA: Well, I know that --

MR. CONAWAY: -- colluding, coordinating, or conspiring with --

MR. PODESTA: Well, you developed some information about this, but --

MR. CONAWAY: I'm asking about your information.

MR. PODESTA: Well, I think that -- you know, there's a lot that's occurred post-election about, you know, what -- who talked to who. But I don't have -- I can't provide the committee with firsthand knowledge.

MR. CONAWAY: Okay. I'm not expecting you to. I just want to make sure for the record that we're clear as to what you did in fact answer earlier with respect to the Russians. I think I've got the answer.

MR. PODESTA: Okay. That's fair enough.

MR. CONAWAY: Sir?

MR. PODESTA: That's fair enough.

MR. CONAWAY: Okay. Anything else?

DR. WENSTRUP: Yes. A few questions, if I may.

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Is the campaign still open? Has it closed its books completely? Is it still open?

MR. PODESTA: I believe it is still open.

DR. WENSTRUP: Is anyone still on the payroll?

MR. PODESTA: I think so.

DR. WENSTRUP: So you don't know who they would be?

MR. PODESTA: Beth Jones, I think, remains on the payroll.

DR. WENSTRUP: Does the --

MR. PODESTA: It is in the shutdown phase, but I think the corporate entity is still alive while, you know -- and it's wrapping up its FEC filings, et cetera. And Beth -- and Beth was and I believe still is on the payroll.

DR. WENSTRUP: Does the campaign have any debt?

MR. PODESTA: No.

DR. WENSTRUP: You mention, and just correct me if I'm stating this wrong, you said there was joint efforts from the campaign and the DNC.

MR. PODESTA: Correct.

DR. WENSTRUP: Some contracting was done together.

MR. PODESTA: I don't know that the --

DR. WENSTRUP: Sharing of expenses, if you will.

MR. PODESTA: Yeah, I think it was appropriate under a joint fundraising.

DR. WENSTRUP: And when did that begin? When did that relationship begin?

MR. PODESTA: It began -- we entered into the joint fundraising agreement, as did Senator Sanders, during the course of the primaries. But the joint fundraising agreement was to raise funds for the general election.

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DR. WENSTRUP: But Senator Sanders was engaged with that arrangement as well?

MR. PODESTA: He had his own separate joint fundraising agreement.

DR. WENSTRUP: With the DNC?

MR. PODESTA: With the DNC. And I believe that was executed. I'm pretty sure it was.

DR. WENSTRUP: And then the other question I have, because I just didn't quite understand it, you said the payments for things were 50- 50. Can you explain who --

MR. PODESTA: That is information that was released by Perkins. So I have no --

DR. WENSTRUP: But who are the 50? Explain that to me.

MR. PODESTA: Fifty percent of the bill was paid for --

DR. WENSTRUP: Of what bill?

MR. PODESTA: Of Fusion's bill to Perkins was paid for with funds coming from the campaign and 50 percent was paid for by funds coming from the DNC --

DR. WENSTRUP: Gotcha.

MR. PODESTA: -- to Perkins.

DR. WENSTRUP: Okay. You said that also, if I heard you correctly, that Fusion GPS was doing research on Mrs. Clinton as well. Did you say that?

MR. PODESTA: No. They may have been, but I didn't say that.

DR. WENSTRUP: Okay. I thought you said that they were producing some things that were factually inaccurate on her. Who were you referring to?

MR. PODESTA: The Trump campaign.

DR. WENSTRUP: Okay. The Trump campaign, but not using Fusion

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GPS. I just wanted to be clear.

MR. PODESTA: I don't think they were using Fusion GPS.

DR. WENSTRUP: Okay.

MR. PODESTA: I hope they weren't. That would have been a whopper of a conflict.

DR. WENSTRUP: Yeah.

Do you know if Fusion GPS sought to get a contract with Republicans candidates, Republican Party?

MR. PODESTA: They got a contract with that -- I don't know the arrangements, I just know what I've read -- but that Paul Singer, who's a major Republican donor, who was active as a donor in the primaries, who did not want to see Mr. Trump be the nominee, funded an effort to -- and that's the origin of Fusion's involvement.

DR. WENSTRUP: I gotcha.

MR. PODESTA: So they were active during the Republican primaries, but through an independent organization.

DR. WENSTRUP: But they weren't active during the Democrat Party, on the Democrat side in any way?

MR. PODESTA: I don't know. That's a question best put to them.

DR. WENSTRUP: Thank you.

MR. PODESTA: We weren't using them, I don't think. And I don't think Mr. Elias was. Mr. Elias' contract with them and their original contacts -- again, this has all come out in the last little bit -- occurred after what must have been the Indiana primary, after Mr. Trump secured the Republican nomination.

DR. WENSTRUP: Thank you.

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MR. CONAWAY: [REDACTED]

MR. SWALWELL: Just a few, Mr. Chairman.

When you say, Mr. Podesta, that Donald Trump was the preferred candidate of the Russians, is that opinion informed by the ICA assessment, which also found that he was the preferred candidate of the Russians?

MR. PODESTA: Yes.

MR. SWALWELL: To your recollection, is March 19th, 2016, the day that your email account was hacked, March 19th? Is that when the spear-phishing email was sent?

MR. PODESTA: I think that -- I believe that's accurate, Mr. Swalwell.

MR. SWALWELL: And to Mr. Conaway's question about collusion, conspiracy, coordination, would you agree that when 3 months later, after your email was hacked, an email was sent to Donald Trump Jr., the son of the President, where the subject line was, "Clinton, Russia, private, confidential," and it offered dirt on your principal, Hillary Clinton, and Donald Trump Jr. responded, "I love it. Can you hold it till September?" and then went on to take the meeting, that that at least demonstrated an eagerness and a willingness to work with people who had information on Hillary Clinton.

MR. PODESTA: Well, sir, the events of that meeting are now well-known, and it involves others, other than Mr. Trump Jr. But it seemed -- we, of course, didn't know about this meeting at the time. This is all subsequent to the election. But it seemed that there was certain eagerness to receive information coming from Russian sources.

I think, if I remember right, the origins of that is a relationship that The Trump Organization had with Mr. Agalarov, if I pronounced his name right, who



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was their cosponsor in the Miss Universe Pageant in Moscow.

MR. SWALWELL: You're familiar with the Intelligence Community assessment that -- to the publishing of your emails, that that was WikiLeaks, and that WikiLeaks did that in connection with the Russian Government. Is that right?

MR. PODESTA: Yes.

MR. SWALWELL: Are you familiar -- going back to be Mr. Conaway's question about coordination, conspiracy, or collusion -- are you familiar that Donald Trump Jr. was communicating through direct message with WikiLeaks around the time that WikiLeaks was publishing hacked emails of yours?

MR. PODESTA: I didn't know that. I knew that Mr. Stone claimed to be indirect connection with WikiLeaks. And I've now subsequently learned about some of the direct messages. But I don't have any real knowledge it other than what's been in the paper.

MR. SWALWELL: And did you hear Donald Trump, the candidate, after the publishing of your emails by WikiLeaks, which the Intelligence Community has assessed was working with Russia, did you hear candidate Trump say from that point to the end of the campaign, "I love WikiLeaks," at a number of public appearances?

MR. PODESTA: Yes. I also heard him say in the summer of 2016 that the Russians should hack Hillary's emails, too.

MR. SWALWELL: And finally, are you familiar with Cambridge Analytica?

MR. PODESTA: Yes.

MR. SWALWELL: Who do you know --

MR. PODESTA: I am familiar with it, you know.

MR. SWALWELL: What did you know the relationship to be with the

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Trump campaign?

MR. PODESTA: I'm not sure I knew any really -- during the course of the campaign, I'm not sure I knew who they were. It's all, whatever knowledge I have, I think is subsequent to the campaign.

But they are a data analytics firm that provided services, I think, initially to the Cruz campaign and then to the Trump campaign on voter attitudes and voter targeting.

MR. SWALWELL: And what do you make -- going to Mr. Conaway's question about coordination, collusion, conspiracy -- of Julian Assange of WikiLeaks acknowledging that when Cambridge Analytica was working for the Trump campaign they reached out to Julian Assange seeking Hillary Clinton's emails.

MR. PODESTA: No, again, I think that you can -- those facts have been developed relatively recently as a result of these inquiries. So it seems to me that there is a lot of smoke, but, you know, all I know is what I read in the newspaper.

MR. SWALWELL: I yield back.

MR. HECK: So, Mr. Podesta, remind me and for the record again what position you held during the Clinton administration?

MR. PODESTA: I held three positions. I was assistant secretary and assistant to the President's staff secretary at the beginning. I became the deputy chief of staff and then the chief of staff in the last 2 years.

MR. HECK: So based on that professional experience, your role in the campaign and other professional experiences that you've had in this town, did you find the Intelligence Community's assessment that the Russians had engaged in active measures to interfere in the 2016 Presidential election to be credible?

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MR. PODESTA: Say that one more time. I'm sorry, I just misunderstood your question. Did I find that they were using active measures to --

MR. HECK: No. Did you find the IC's assessment that they were --

MR. PODESTA: Oh, to be credible?

MR. HECK: Yes.

MR. PODESTA: Yes, absolutely.

MR. HECK: Did you find the --

MR. PODESTA: Can I say, Mr. Heck, that it was preceded by a significant amount of experts in the field who studied these things, and particularly the hacking, starting with CrowdStrike, which examined the DNC hack, but other independent investigators who fingered as having the signature of Russian intelligence actors. So I think by the time it actually was released, it came as no great surprise to people who have expertise in this field that that was their conclusion.

MR. HECK: Did you find the Intelligence Community's assessment that these active measures were, in fact, intended to both sow discord or disunity within the American electorate and to benefit the candidacy of the Donald Trump to be credible?

MR. PODESTA: Yes.

MR. HECK: Did you find the IC's assessment that these active measures with these objectives was broader, deeper, and more sophisticated than before, including significant paid ads, bots, planted stories, et cetera, did you find that credible?

MR. PODESTA: I found it both credible and I think we continued to learn more and more about that. I think we obviously understood the behavior involved

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in hacking, breaking the law, stealing the emails, putting them out in public, trying to interfere with our -- first our convention, to show discord inside our nominating process, and then obviously in the general election.

I think the extent of their activities in social media, in paid media, in the use of the propagation and promulgation of what some people refer to the white sources, RT, Sputnik, combined with the propagation of fake news and the pushing that out through Facebook, through Twitter, some lesser extent I think through Google, that was surprising, but yes, I found the assessment, I guess, credible.

MR. HECK: Do you have any personal knowledge that neither the Trump campaign nor anyone associated with it was not engaged in colluding, conspiring, or coordinating with these active measures by the Russians intended to benefit one candidate on a broader, deeper, and more sophisticated basis than ever before?

MR. PODESTA: Well, it is a kind of a negative question.

MR. HECK: It is.

MR. PODESTA: I think that the one -- I just come back to the one thing I said earlier about Mr. Trump encouraging them to conduct active measures, which he did, if I remember right, in July of 2016.

MR. HECK: Do you believe that encouragement constitutes collusion? Do you understand the definition of that word?

MR. PODESTA: It certainly constitutes bad judgment.

MR. HECK: Based on your life's experience, what we know, the facts revealed to date, including many of them as referenced by Congressman Swalwell, would you find it either plausible or credible that the Trump campaign did

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in fact engage in either coordination or conspiracy with the Russians to engage in these active measures?

MR. PODESTA: Well, Mr. Heck, as you noted, you weren't here the last time. I think that there's a whole line of inquiry around Mr. Stone's interactions that seem to indicate that he was aware before some of the leaking that it was going to happen. And, you know, there's now the meeting that took place at Trump Tower that involved Donald Trump Jr.

But I think it's not my place to characterize that. I think it is hopefully the judgment of this committee in the end of the day that will reach a bipartisan conclusion about what actually happened.

MR. HECK: It is some of our hope as well, sir.

Thank you. I yield back.

MR. SWALWELL: Thank you, Mr. Heck.

Chairman Conaway, would you object if Mr. Schiff asked a few questions before we wrapped up?

MR. CONAWAY: You've got it.

He showed up late and too casual.

MS. ROS-LEHTINEN: Yes.

MR CONAWAY: You can't ask questions without a tie.

MR. SCHIFF: Certainly can't ask very good ones.

I will be very brief. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We know from the plea of George Papadopoulos that as of late April the Trump campaign, at least through Mr. Papadopoulos, was made aware that the Russians had thousands of stolen Clinton emails. At that same time, in late April, was the Clinton campaign or were you aware that the Russians were in

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possession of her emails?

MR. PODESTA: I should have paid -- the short answer to that question is no. The longer answer to the question is I should have paid more attention to Mr. Papadopoulos' plea deal, because I think what that was in reference to was some surveillance that they had done in the context of -- but the precision with which you asked that question, Mr. Schiff, I wasn't -- I'm not clear about the details of what he actually said they told him at the time. But in April we were unaware that the Russians had that information.

MR. SCHIFF: In April were you aware that the DNC computers had been hacked?

MR. PODESTA: I was not and I don't think the campaign was.

MR. SCHIFF: So if the campaign wasn't aware in April that the hacking had even occurred, the first campaign to be notified the Russians were in possession of stolen emails would have been the Trump campaign through Mr. Papadopoulos.

MR. PODESTA: If that's what they informed Mr. Papadopoulos, yes.

MR. SCHIFF: Have you had a chance, by virtue of the open hearing that we did and the Senate as well, to see any of the advertising that the Russians did in social media or the messages they were pushing out?

MR. PODESTA: You know, I'm generally aware of that, yeah.

MR. SCHIFF: One of the things we're interested in is how closely the Russian messages dovetailed with the Trump campaign messages. Was there anything significant that you thought about the RT advertising on the Secretary's health or all of the kind of racially divisive ads, or the RT advertising on articles such as the four times the Clintons were almost indicted? Were any of those



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themes consistent with what the Trump campaign was also pushing out?

MR. PODESTA: Yes, but -- well, I guess my answer is yes. They were consistent with what the Trump campaign was doing.

MR. SCHIFF: How much knowledge did you have of how the Trump campaign was targeting its social media? Is that something that you had much visibility into as a campaign?

MR. PODESTA: No, not me personally. So I think it -- I think that there are people better able to answer that question inside the campaign, who whether they were -- I'm sure they were tracking some of their spin, but I don't know that they understood who they were directing those ads to.

MR. SCHIFF: And if we were going to try to look to see whether any of the targeting of the Russians ads mirrored the targeting of the Trump social media campaign, who within the Clinton campaign would have been in the best position to track the Trump spend?

MR. PODESTA: Probably Teddy Goff (ph) was director of social media.

MR. SCHIFF: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

DR. WENSTRUP: You've been asked a lot of things today that are your opinion, based on, I think, longevity of your career in American politics. I think that that can be reasonable. But we're asking you to comment on things you've read in the paper, which, you know, things that are in the paper aren't necessarily admissible in the court. But nonetheless, that's where we are in the conversation.

So do you think the Russians would be happy that Mrs. Clinton, had she won or not, otherwise, do you think they would be happy that their work in some way or another brought her down.

MR. PODESTA: [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]  
DR. WENSTRUP: [REDACTED]

MR. PODESTA: [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

DR. WENSTRUP: Yeah. So in that vein, I mean, you've said that you trust a portion of the IC community's assessment that they wanted her to lose. So then, therefore, you would assume that they're happy with the work that they may have played in that or would have played even if she won.

So do you think they're sad today of allegations against Trump and the campaign? Are they disheartened by what's going on? Or is it possible that they're happy that no matter what the result is they've engaged in the American political system in a way that has disrupted our Nation?

MR. PODESTA: Well, I think that one of the strategies that the Russians have employed across democratic institutions in Europe as well as in the U.S., and probably beyond Europe, is to try to undermine people's faith in democratic institutions.

And so in that context I think the questions, as I said, around EU viability, NATO structures, transatlantic alliance, and the very heart of whether you can trust democratic elections is part, I think, of their global strategy to weaken, if you will, the West, rather than strengthen their own position, taking down our traditional alliances, and playing a kind of spoiler's game, if you will.

DR. WENSTRUP: So for Russia right now it's kind of heads I win, tails you lose, because either way, either result of the election, they've got us in disarray.

MR. PODESTA: They have us in -- I think they have us in disarray.

DR. WENSTRUP: Thank you. I yield back.



MR. CONAWAY: Mr. Podesta, thank you very much for coming in today.  
I appreciate it.

And with that, we're adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 4:52 p.m., the interview was concluded.]

